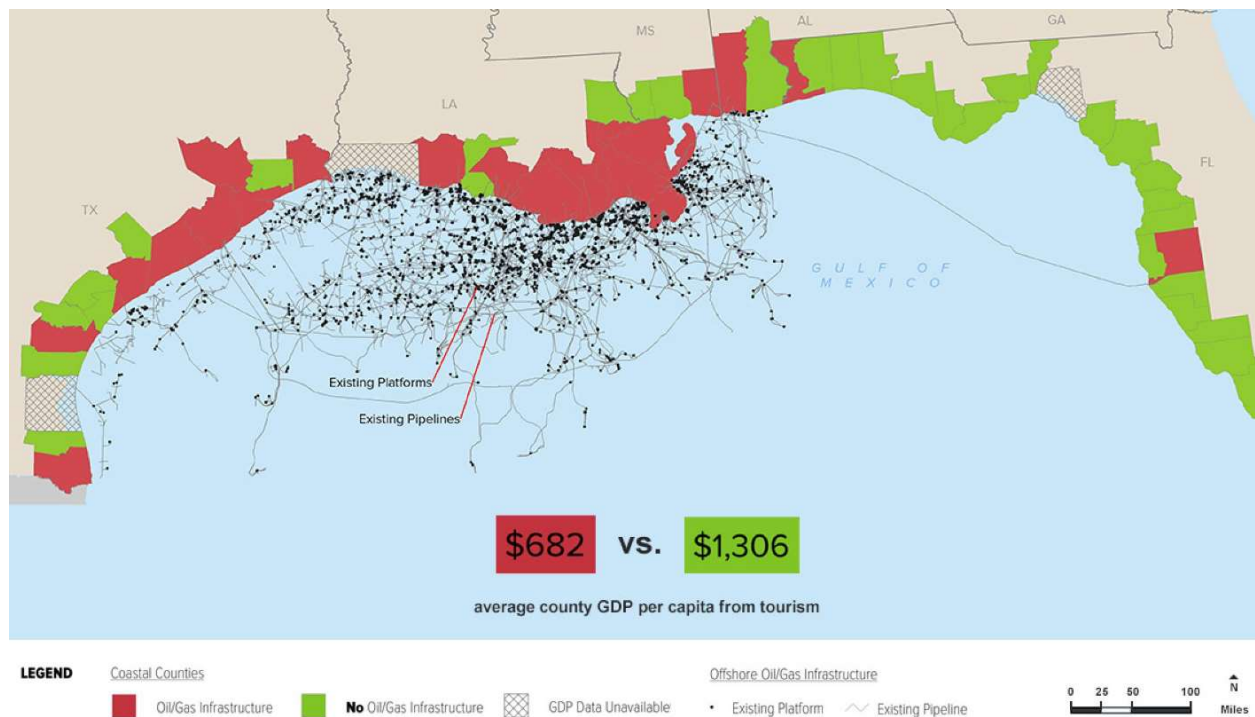


Oil drilling infrastructure drives away tourism dollars

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Communities on the Gulf of Mexico without offshore oil-drilling infrastructure fare far better when it comes to tourism than do counties and parishes housing drilling activities, according to an analysis by SELC.

SELC's findings run counter to claims by the oil industry—and echoed by drilling proponents—that oil and tourism coexist in the Gulf. To the contrary, SELC's analysis found that counties without offshore drilling infrastructure, such as pipelines and refineries, netted twice as many tourism dollars per capita when compared to other Gulf counties and parishes. The average per-capita GDP generated by tourism was more than \$1,300 in localities without offshore infrastructure. But where refineries are present and pipelines come ashore, the per-capita tourism take was less than \$700.

That means there is a drop of about 50 percent in tourism dollars in counties and parishes where oil rigs and other drilling infrastructure are prevalent.

The stark contrast in per-capita tourism income contradicts drilling proponents' assertions that both industries could thrive on the coasts of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Leading tourism associations across the Southeast have strongly and repeatedly weighed in against Atlantic drilling. The Virginia Restaurant, Lodging and Travel Association, the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce, and the South Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce have joined hundreds of communities, businesses, and tourism groups urging our governors oppose offshore drilling. All have said that a catastrophic spill – as well as the day-to-day pollution and industrialization – would be devastating to our coastal tourism economy.

Municipalities along the eastern seaboard also are voicing their objection to the possibility of offshore oil drilling. Last week Kure Beach, N.C. became the 100th local government to pass a resolution opposing Atlantic oil drilling and exploration and this week Cedar Point, N.C., joined them, becoming the 101st.